

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Canceled)

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1-8 wherein the identification of the 2-dimensional positions at which the selected features occur in the image is predicated on an assumption that the selected features appear as coplanar in the image.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4-8 wherein the surface is a 2-dimensional surface.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4-8 wherein the surface is a flat surface.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4-8 wherein the surface is an irregular body that appears flat when observed at a distance.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 48, further comprising using the determined location and orientation of the surface to introduce a supplemental image into the images of the sequence at a size, location, and orientation that are relative to those of the surface.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 48, further comprising using the determined location and orientation of the surface to superimpose a view of a 3-dimensional object over the surface.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1-A method in a computing system for tracking the movement of a dimensional surface having an arbitrary appearance relative to a camera, comprising:

capturing an image of the surface;

analyzing the captured image of the surface to identify visual features present in the captured image;

from the identified visual features, selecting a plurality of visual features for use in tracking the movement of the surface;

receiving a sequence of images captured by the camera, at least some of which constitute a view of at least a portion of the surface;

for each image of the sequence:

identifying the 2-dimensional positions at which the selected features occur in the image; and

based upon the 2-dimensional positions at which the features are identified in the image, determining the 3-dimensional location and orientation of the surface in the current image of the sequence with respect to the camera,

wherein the selection of identified features is performed based upon a comparison of the levels of contrast provided by each of the identified features.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1-A method in a computing system for tracking the movement of a dimensional surface having an arbitrary appearance relative to a camera, comprising:

capturing an image of the surface;

analyzing the captured image of the surface to identify visual features present in the captured image;

from the identified visual features, selecting a plurality of visual features for use in tracking the movement of the surface;

receiving a sequence of images captured by the camera, at least some of which constitute a view of at least a portion of the surface;

for each image of the sequence:

identifying the 2-dimensional positions at which the selected features occur in the image; and

based upon the 2-dimensional positions at which the features are identified in the image, determining the 3-dimensional location and orientation of the surface in the current image of the sequence with respect to the camera,

wherein the selection of identified features is performed based upon a comparison of the levels of uniqueness of each of the identified features among all of the identified features.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1-11 wherein the selection of identified features is performed based upon a comparison of the levels of accuracy with which they can be used to determine the position and orientation of the surface.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1-A method in a computing system for tracking the movement of a dimensional surface having an arbitrary appearance relative to a camera, comprising:

capturing an image of the surface;

analyzing the captured image of the surface to identify visual features present in the captured image;

from the identified visual features, selecting a plurality of visual features for use in tracking the movement of the surface;

receiving a sequence of images captured by the camera, at least some of which constitute a view of at least a portion of the surface;

for each image of the sequence:

identifying the 2-dimensional positions at which the selected features occur in the image; and

based upon the 2-dimensional positions at which the features are identified in the image, determining the 3-dimensional location and orientation of the surface in the current image of the sequence with respect to the camera,

wherein the selection of identified features includes selecting visual features in at least two different size ranges,

the method further comprising selecting one of the size ranges based upon a measure of the distance to the surface's present location,

and wherein selected features in the selected size range are used to determine the location and orientation of the surface.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 49, further comprising, for each image of the sequence:

based upon the 2-dimensional positions at which the features are identified in one or more prior images of the sequence, predicting 2-dimensional positions at which the features will occur in the current image; and

establishing search zones about the predicted positions,
and wherein identifying the 2-dimensional positions at which the selected features occur in the image comprises searching the established search zones for the selected features.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 49 wherein the surface, in addition to having an arbitrary appearance, is modified to contain one or more fiducial markers,

the method further comprising, in a first image of the sequence, identifying and analyzing a portion of the image corresponding to the fiducial markers to determine the 3-dimensional location and orientation of the surface in the image,

and wherein the determining the 3-dimensional location and orientation of the surface in the first image of the sequence is used to identify the 2-dimensional positions at which the selected features occur in the first image of the sequence.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13 wherein each fiducial marker comprises a unique distinguishing pattern.

15. (Original) The method of claim 13 wherein each fiducial marker is square-shaped.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1-9 wherein the 3-dimensional location and orientation of the surface in the current image of the sequence is determined without the use of explicit fiducial markers.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1-9 further comprising capturing the sequence of images using the camera,

and wherein the determination is made in real-time with respect to the capture.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1-9 wherein, between two successive images of the sequence, the camera moves relative to the environment.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1-9 wherein, between two successive images of the sequence, the surface moves relative to the environment.

20-26. (Canceled)

27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26-28 wherein the selected innate visual features of the subject surface number at least four.

28. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26—A method in a computing system for determining the 3-dimensional location and orientation of a subject surface in a distinguished perspective image of the subject surface, the subject surface having innate visual features, a subset of which are selected, comprising:

using the location of the selected visual features in a perspective image of the subject surface that precedes the distinguished perspective image in time, identifying search zones in the distinguished perspective image;

searching the identified search zones for the selected visual features to determine the 2-dimensional locations at which the selected visual features occur; and

based on the determined 2-dimensional locations, determining the 3-dimensional location and orientation of a subject surface in a distinguished perspective image,

wherein a plurality of subsets of innate visual features of the subject surface are selected, each subset containing features of a different general size,

the method further comprising, based on an earlier-determined 3-dimensional location of the subject surface, choosing one subset of features,

and wherein the identified search zones are searched for the features of the chosen subset.

29. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26—28 wherein the determination of the 2-dimensional locations at which the selected visual features occur is predicated on an assumption that the selected visual features appear as coplanar in the image.

30. (Canceled)

31. (Canceled)

32. (New) A computer-readable medium whose contents cause a computing system to perform a method for tracking the movement of a dimensional surface having an arbitrary appearance relative to a camera, the method comprising:

capturing an image of the surface;

analyzing the captured image of the surface to identify visual features present in the captured image;

from the identified visual features, selecting a plurality of visual features for use in tracking the movement of the surface;

receiving a sequence of images captured by the camera, at least some of which constitute a view of at least a portion of the surface;

for each image of the sequence:

identifying the 2-dimensional positions at which the selected features occur in the image; and

based upon the 2-dimensional positions at which the features are identified in the image, determining the 3-dimensional location and orientation of the surface in the current image of the sequence with respect to the camera,

wherein the selection of identified features is performed based upon a comparison of the levels of contrast provided by each of the identified features.

33. (New) A computer-readable medium whose contents cause a computing system to perform a method for tracking the movement of a dimensional surface having an arbitrary appearance relative to a camera, the method comprising:

capturing an image of the surface;

analyzing the captured image of the surface to identify visual features present in the captured image;

from the identified visual features, selecting a plurality of visual features for use in tracking the movement of the surface;

receiving a sequence of images captured by the camera, at least some of which constitute a view of at least a portion of the surface;

for each image of the sequence:

identifying the 2-dimensional positions at which the selected features occur in the image; and

based upon the 2-dimensional positions at which the features are identified in the image, determining the 3-dimensional location and orientation of the surface in the current image of the sequence with respect to the camera, wherein the selection of identified features is performed based upon a comparison of the levels of uniqueness of each of the identified features among all of the identified features.

34. (New) A computer-readable medium whose contents cause a computing system to perform a method for tracking the movement of a dimensional surface having an arbitrary appearance relative to a camera, the method comprising:

capturing an image of the surface;

analyzing the captured image of the surface to identify visual features present in the captured image;

from the identified visual features, selecting a plurality of visual features for use in tracking the movement of the surface;

receiving a sequence of images captured by the camera, at least some of which constitute a view of at least a portion of the surface;

for each image of the sequence:

identifying the 2-dimensional positions at which the selected features occur in the image; and

based upon the 2-dimensional positions at which the features are identified in the image, determining the 3-dimensional location and orientation of the surface in the current image of the sequence with respect to the camera, wherein the selection of identified features includes selecting visual features in at least two different size ranges,

the method further comprising selecting one of the size ranges based upon a measure of the distance to the surface's present location,

and wherein selected features in the selected size range are used to determine the location and orientation of the surface.

35. (New) A computer-readable medium whose contents cause a computing system to perform a method for determining the 3-dimensional location and orientation of a subject surface in a distinguished perspective image of the subject surface, the subject surface having innate visual features, a subset of which are selected, the method comprising:

using the location of the selected visual features in a perspective image of the subject surface that precedes the distinguished perspective image in time, identifying search zones in the distinguished perspective image;

searching the identified search zones for the selected visual features to determine the 2-dimensional locations at which the selected visual features occur; and

based on the determined 2-dimensional locations, determining the 3-dimensional location and orientation of a subject surface in a distinguished perspective image,

wherein a plurality of subsets of innate visual features of the subject surface are selected, each subset containing features of a different general size,

the method further comprising, based on an earlier-determined 3-dimensional location of the subject surface, choosing one subset of features,

and wherein the identified search zones are searched for the features of the chosen subset.